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ABSTRACT

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) database for San Diego County reported in this document includes demographic and reading appraisal data collected during 15 months through April 1990 for more than 60,000 students in 6 diverse programs. Some of the findings resulting from analysis of the database include the following: (1) the San Diego County program population is 55 percent female, 45 percent male, with approximately 85 percent of the participants in the programs aged 39 years or younger; (2) nearly all the participants in one program are Hispanic, but in the other programs more than one-third of the participants are white, 19 percent black, 13 percent Asian and other, and 32 percent Hispanic; (3) only 17 percent of the participants had completed 13 or more years of school; (4) the mean or average reading scores on CASAS tests was 218 in one program, and 230 in the other programs; and (5) 41 percent of the study population scored below a CASAS 225, which is regarded as passing for literacy. The report includes 18 tables and 37 references. (KC)

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San Diego County Literacy Report

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Prepared for

The United Way Community Problem-Solving Sub-Committee

by

CASAS Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System

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Foreword

CASAS is a comprehensive curriculum management and assessment system designed to assess identified competencies of educational programs for all levels of Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language and Adult Special Education, including employability curriculums. CASAS is transportable to and has been implemented in more than 200 agencies throughout California and in 45 other states.

CASAS fills a critical void in the measurement of literacy for adult and secondary students. CASAS scale scores based on the assessment of basic reading, math and English language skills in a functional or "life-skills" context replace grade level measurements with meaningful literacy indicators. CASAS scale scores recognize an adult student's work and other life experiences and the diversified cultural backgrounds of students.

A score of 215 on the CASAS scale has been the minimal literacy benchmark in the state of California for programs gauging literacy and potential employability. At the December 1989 California Education Summit Adult Literacy Focus Group, literacy was defined as a competency achieved by an adult who has attained a score on the CASAS Scale of 225 or above or who has attained an equivalent level of achievement.

The CASAS database for San Diego County reported herein includes demographic and Reading Appraisal data collected over approximately 15 months through April 1990 for more than 60,000 students. Data presented in this report are heterogeneous, based on six diverse programs in San Diego County.

This report was prepared by June Simon, Patricia Rickard and Diane Bailey for the United Way Community Problem-Solving Sub-Committee in response to their ongoing literacy needs assessment. CASAS is pleased to make this contribution to the assessment of literacy in San Diego County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Literacy Defined 1

Estimated Illiteracy 1

High Risk Groups 2

Economic and Human Costs 3

National Concern 4

Statewide Concern 5

County Level Concern 5

Literacy Assessment 6

San Diego County Database 8

Gender 11

Age 12

Ethnic Background 12

Native Language 12

Years of Education Completed 16

San Diego County Reading Appraisal Scores 18

Summary 23

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

1. 1989-90 CASAS Database, San Diego County (Table) 10

1. CASAS Five Program Subsample - Gender 11

2.a. CASAS Five Program Subsample - Age 13

2.b. San Diego County Population - Age 13

3.a. CASAS Five Program Subsample - Ethnic Background 14

3.b. San Diego County Population - Ethnic Background 14

4.a. CASAS Five Program Subsample - Native Language 15

4.b. San Diego County Population - Native Language 15

5.a. CASAS Five Program Subsample - Years of School Completed 17

5.b. San Diego County Population - Years of School Completed 17

6.a. CASAS Reading Scale Scores Including IRCA 19

6.b. CASAS Reading Scale Scores Excluding IRCA 19

7.a. CASAS Reading Mean Scale Scores Including IRCA 20

7.b. CASAS Reading Mean Scale Scores Excluding IRCA 20

8.a. CASAS Reading Scale Scores Below/Above 215 21

8.b. CASAS Reading Scale Scores Below/Above 225 21

9.a. CASAS Five Program Subsample
Reading Scale Scores Below/Above 215 22

9.b. CASAS Five Program Subsample
Reading Scale Scores Below/Above 225 22

San Diego County Literacy

Literacy Defined

The diverse terminology associated with the topic of literacy is a reflection of the diverse population of people and situations to which it refers. With heightened interest in the phenomenon in recent years, a plethora of published materials has distinguished between literacy related terminology including the terms alliterate, illiterate, double illiterate, and others. Literacy is viewed by some as a value inherent in our society while others perceive literacy and illiteracy as the presence or absence of functional skills. While no singular definition is agreed upon by all, the 1986 study by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) defined literacy as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." While this definition which encompasses a functional component and views literacy as both a skill and a value has been widely accepted, other national studies continue to expand the definition to include a listening component. Illiteracy might conversely be defined as the limited ability or inability to use printed, oral and written information to function in society, achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential.

Estimated Illiteracy

The derived literacy rate and the acuity of the illiteracy problem is dependent upon the definition or standard used. The disparate estimates of the exact magnitude of the illiteracy problem mirror the lack of consensus regarding the definition of literacy. Some estimate one out of five U.S. adults cannot read or write, others estimate one out of eight. The controversy aside, an estimated 23 million Americans are illiterate, lacking even basic reading skills and unable to understand job ads, labels on consumer products, or voter information. Another 23 million are estimated to be functionally illiterate--having reading problems

serious enough that they are unable to competently handle even minimal demands of daily living. (Lerche, 1985).

An expanded definition of illiteracy to include the application of basic reading, writing, and comprehension skills to allow functional ability at home, work, and in the community would most likely increase these estimates considerably. If Kozol (1985) is right, 25 million American adults cannot read the poison warnings on a can of pesticide, a letter from their child's teacher, or the front page of the newspaper and an additional 35 million read below the level needed to function successfully in our society. Depending on the statistical source used, estimates are as high as 72 million Americans who are incapable of reading well enough to complete a job application correctly. (Schoultz, Training and Development Journal, Sept. 86, p. 44). While the numbers vary, the common thread throughout the various estimates is that illiteracy is indeed a widespread problem in our society.

High Risk Groups

While illiteracy knows no racial or ethnic boundaries and we are all virtually at risk in one way or another, some sub-populations in our society have been identified at greater risk than others. The primary origins of illiteracy are social and economic in nature. Language, age, race, and income level have been identified as major contributing factors as have immigration and reliance on a language other than English. Physical origins such as illness and learning disabilities which interfere with the learning process are also recognized.

Since these risk factors are not considered to be independent, it is believed that risk increases when more than one indicator is characteristic of an "at risk" individual or populations of individuals. Geographic regions containing high concentrations of "at risk" populations might consequently be labeled "at risk" as well. The U.S. literacy rate is marginally useful in comparing our nation to

other nations but less useful and even deceiving if applied to analysis of literacy on a regional level.

The United States Department of Education (Update on Adult Illiteracy, Fall, 1982, Bureau of Census) reports that most persons classified as illiterate live in central cities of metropolitan areas and are under age 50. The National Center for Education Information points out that the illiteracy rate for Hispanics is greater than for other Americans, noting that 52 percent of Hispanics over age 25 have not completed high school. Lerche (1985) estimates that 44 percent of Black teenagers and 56 percent of Hispanic teenagers are functionally illiterate in English. These "at risk" minority populations are overrepresented in the lowest levels of educational achievement and are the fastest growing segments of our population. The economically disadvantaged population "at risk" includes those with low income and the unemployed.

It should be pointed out that while Whites reportedly have the lowest rates of illiteracy, they are the largest single group of illiterates. Native English speaking Whites and Blacks combine to comprise a clear majority of the illiterate population. The geographical distribution and demographic characteristics of persons identified as "at risk" for illiteracy are important information for literacy program planning, at both a national and local level.

Economic and Human Costs

The cost of illiteracy is difficult to measure. Some would argue with the specific number but no one argues that the cost is insignificant. The cost of illiteracy in the workplace and unemployability due to illiteracy is overwhelming. Workplace illiteracy is manifest in both compromised quality and lowered productivity. Our resultant inability to compete in a global economy carries an enormous price tag.

These economic costs are borne by us both individually and collectively. As individuals the burden of illiteracy is manifest in increased cost of consumer

goods, lost job opportunity, or lost income. As a nation, illiteracy manifests in a unhealthy balance of trade, inferior goods, reduced or lost productivity, and an unprecedented foreign trade deficit.

On a personal level, the price tag in terms of human cost cannot be measured and might be perceived to be even greater. Those who have come forward to tell their story provide insight into the diminished self-esteem, cultural deprivation, and desperation they experience as "second-class citizens" because of their illiteracy.

National Concern

There is an area where consensus does exist, namely that illiteracy is a problem to be addressed with some urgency. Many proclaim that a national crisis already exists while others predict a crisis at the turn of the century unless the problem is addressed in a timely manner.

In February 1990 the White House released national performance goals for education calling for a new standard for an educated citizenry. Goal number five, which pertains to adult literacy, states that, "By the year 2000, every adult American will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." This goal, it is stated, must be achieved if the United States is to remain competitive in the world marketplace and our citizens are to reach their maximum potential.

The national performance goals, according to the February 1990 White House Press Release, are not the President's goals, they are the nation's goals. Governors have been asked to work within their respective state to achieve dissemination and implementation of these goals at a state level.

Statewide Concern

A 1987 report for the California Department of Education provided a conservative estimate that 3.1 million persons in California are in need of literacy services and points out that while the highest rates of illiteracy are found among minorities, the greatest numbers of illiterates are Whites. While an estimated 25 to 30 percent of Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics are estimated to be illiterate, approximately 9.8 percent of Whites estimated to be illiterate translates into approximately 1.3 million people in need of literacy programs. Of the approximate 3.1 million persons in California in need of literacy services, the 1987 report estimated that services were provided to only 138,000 students, the majority of whom were Asian or Hispanic in English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult basic skills classes. If these figures continue to be accurate, the majority of California adults in need of literacy services are underserved. Native English speaking Whites and Blacks who combined comprise a clear majority of the illiterate population are clearly unserved or underserved at the present time.

A 1990 report issued by the California Department of Education stated six literacy-related goals targeting a five percent per year decrease in adult illiteracy for each of the next ten years to enable California adults to compete in the workplace; understand and function in our democracy; and enrich the quality of their lives. The report calls for the expansion and enhancement of literacy programs for the current unserved or underserved illiterate population in the state of California.

County Level Concern

The breadth and depth of the illiteracy problem in San Diego County is not clearly determined at the present time. The 1988 Final Report and Plan of Action prepared at the request of the San Diego Council on Literacy estimated between 450,000 and 500,000 functionally illiterate adults in San Diego County. Based on these findings, the Literacy Network which is comprised of independent literacy

programs and organizations which support literacy have begun to conduct a needs assessment to better determine the scope of the local problem.

The CASAS data which follow, though not definitive, provide insight into the local illiteracy problems far beyond any heretofore available. Extrapolation based on this data is more valuable than national or even state level data because it is current and specific to San Diego County. The CASAS data is current and based upon a sizable, heterogeneous population representing not only sub-populations at risk but also including the general Adult Basic Education (ABE) population. The databases presented in this report have proven reliability and are representative of the population at risk for illiteracy through assessment of a participant's ability to apply basic skills in a functional context.

Literacy Assessment

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) is a consortium of agencies that provide educational services to adult and alternative educational programs. It is coordinated by CASAS staff under the auspices of the Foundation for Educational Achievement in cooperation with the California Department of Education, Youth, Adult, Alternative Education Services Division. CASAS, a nationally validated program through the U.S. Department of Education, has been implemented in programs in 45 states and more than 200 agencies in California including local adult education agencies, community colleges, correctional institutions, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs and community-based organizations. CASAS also provides the initial basic skills appraisal and basic skills certification for GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence), California's welfare reform legislation.

This comprehensive curriculum management and assessment system designed to assess identified competencies of educational programs for all levels of Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and Adult Special Education,

including employability curriculums is transportable to and has been implemented in diverse programs and geographic settings.

The development of CASAS fills a critical void in the measurement of literacy for adult and secondary students. The various CASAS reading appraisals assess a participant's ability to apply basic reading comprehension skills in a functional or "life skills" context using assessment instruments which have been extensively field tested and have proven validity and reliability. CASAS assessment instruments recognize an adult student's work and other life experiences and the diversified cultural backgrounds of students.

To date, more than 1,000,000 participants nationwide have been assessed using CASAS instruments. Based upon this extensive experience and corresponding database, the following levels of achievement have been determined.

Below 200. Adults scoring below a 200 scale score [Beginning Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English As a Second Language (ESL)] have difficulty with the basic literacy and computational skills necessary to function in an employment setting and/or in the community. These adults can handle routine, entry-level jobs but are often limited to jobs requiring only the most basic oral communication in a setting in which all tasks can be demonstrated. These adults have difficulty providing basic personal identification in written form, are not able to compute wages and deductions on paychecks, and cannot follow basic written directions or safety procedures.

200 through 214. Adults scoring between 200 and 214 scale scores can function in intermediate level ABE and ESL programs requiring minimal literacy skills. They are able to satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands. Adults scoring at this level can function in entry-level jobs that require simple oral communication skills where performance tasks are demonstrated. They can provide some basic written information and perform only basic computation.

215 through 224. Adults scoring between 215 and 224 scale scores are functioning above a basic literacy level and are considered to be at an advanced ABE/ESL level. They are able to perform basic literacy tasks and computational skills in a functional employment setting. They are generally able to function in jobs or job training that involves following oral and written instructions and diagrams. They usually have difficulty following more complex sets of directions.

225 and Above. Adults scoring at or above a 225 scale score can generally perform at a high school entry level in basic reading or math. If they do not have a high school diploma, they can profit from instruction in General Education Development (GED) preparation and have a high probability of passing the GED test in a short time. They can usually perform work that involves following oral and written directions in familiar and some unfamiliar situations.

These scale score characteristics facilitate interpretation of test score performance presented later in this report. A score of 215 on the CASAS scale has been the minimal literacy benchmark in the state of California for programs gauging literacy and potential employability. At the December 1989 California Education Summit, Adult Literacy Focus Group, literacy was defined as a competency achieved by an adult who has attained a 225 or above score on the CASAS scale or who has attained an equivalent level of achievement.

San Diego County Database

Demographic information is provided along with reading test score performance on the various CASAS reading appraisals. Some would argue that literacy is not the same as reading, and that reading scores are important only as reflections of student achievement of the broader goals of literacy (CPRE Indicators of Literacy, Robert Calfee, Aug. 88). CASAS assessment instruments, used to measure the adult life skills competencies of San Diego County program participants, are the best indicators currently available for assessing literacy needs in San Diego County.

The CASAS San Diego County database is particularly valuable for the insight it provides regarding illiteracy in the "at risk" populations in San Diego County. It includes demographic and test score performance data collected over approximately 15 months through April 1990 from more than 60,000 clients, the majority of whom are in the "target audience" of local literacy programs.

Data reported is based upon a heterogeneous population of participants in six programs including Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), Employability Competency System (ECS), Adult Basic Education (ABE), the Donovan Correctional Institution, and the St. Vincent de Paul/Joan Kroc Center's homeless population. Information collected on CASAS assessment instruments used in these diverse programs provide the basis for the data presented herein.

Table 1. provides a summary description of the CASAS San Diego County database. Reading test score performance is available for nearly 51,000 participants in the various programs, the majority of whom are in the GAIN and IRCA subsamples.

Because IRCA is large, predominantly male and primarily consisting of Hispanic participants, it is generally reported in isolation from the remaining five programs. By doing so, the ethnic composition of the five county subsample more closely approximates the larger San Diego County adult population. IRCA is also excluded where percentages of participants scoring at a given scale score performance level are presented relative to a total for this CASAS San Diego County database.

Table 1. - 1989-90 CASAS Database, San Diego County

PROGRAM	POPULATION	READING SCORES	DATABASE APRIL, 1990
IRCA	Amnesty	N = 19,936	N = 31,050
ABE/321	Adult Basic Education	N = 4,230	N = 6,045
St. Vincent de Paul & Joan Kroc Center	Homeless	N = 69	N = 69
Donovan Correctional(ABE)*	Prison Inmates	N = 175	N = 304
ECS	JTPA, Employability	N = 409	N = 415
GAIN	AFDC	N = 26,162	N = 26,338
TOTAL	Above Combined	N = 50,979	N = 63,917

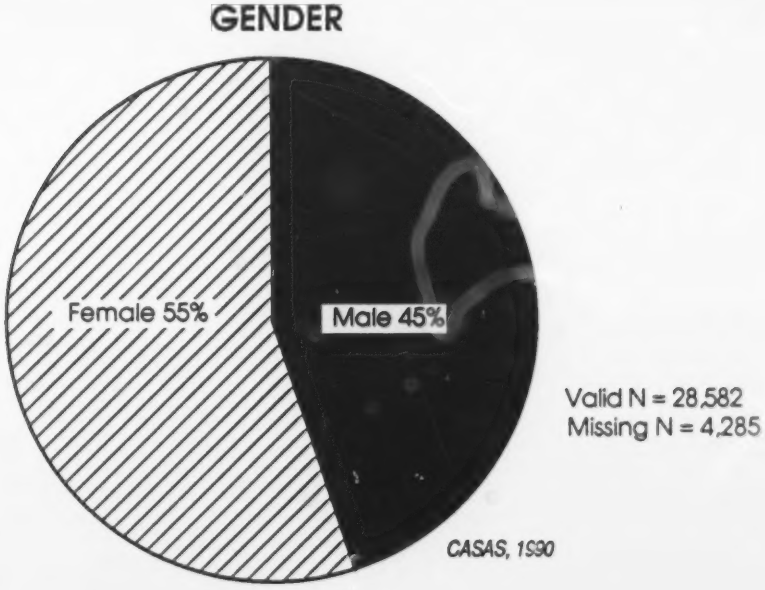
CASAS, 1990

*Donovan reported both individually and in ABE database.

Figures 1. through 5.b. present a demographic profile of CASAS San Diego County program participants including gender, age, ethnicity, native language and years of education completed. The five program subsample is the focal point of most of the graphic presentations and the IRCA subsample is briefly described in the narrative following Figure 5.b. Where data are available, demographic information for the San Diego County general population is also presented.

County level data are primarily provided as a contextual basis for interpreting the CASAS data. It should be noted that the county level data presented in Figures 2.b., 3.b., 4.b. and 5.b. are limited--neither categories nor time periods are perfectly comparable to the CASAS database. As 1990 census data for San Diego County becomes available, however, a model could be developed to allow extrapolation from CASAS data to the larger county population.

Figure 1. - CASAS Five Program Subsample



Gender

The CASAS San Diego County database excluding IRCA is 55 percent female, 45 percent male. Approximately 62 percent of the IRCA subsample is male and if included in the total would shift the balance to 54 percent male, 46 percent female. The small Donovan Corrections subsample which is entirely male is included in Figure 1. According to 1980 census data, San Diego County is approximately 51 percent male, 49 percent female.

Age

As presented in Figure 2.a., approximately 85 percent of the participants in the CASAS Five Program subsample are 39 years old or younger and only 15 percent are 40 or more years of age. The IRCA subsample is younger by comparison. Slightly more than one-half of the IRCA participants in the CASAS sample are age 29 and below.

San Diego County and CASAS age data categories are dissimilar. (See Figure 2.b.) The CASAS "29 and below" category consists of young adults whereas the San Diego County "34 and below" category consists of all persons in the county 34 years old or less.

Ethnic Background

Nearly all (99.4%) of the IRCA participants in this sample are Hispanic and therefore excluded from the overall sample presented in Figure 3.a. to enhance the accuracy of interpretation of the ethnic composition of the CASAS San Diego County database. IRCA participants aside, more than one-third (36%) of the participants are White and less than one-third (32%) Hispanic. Nineteen percent of the participants are Black and 13 percent Asian and Other ethnic groups. This is similar in rank order to the larger San Diego County population for Whites and Hispanics but dissimilar for Blacks and the Asian and Other category.

Native Language

The exclusion of IRCA from the native language data presented in Figure 4.a. is obvious. Approximately two-thirds of the participants in the CASAS San Diego sample are native English speakers and 34 percent reported Spanish or Other languages as their native language. An estimated 79 percent of the overall San Diego County population are English speakers (See Figure 4.a.)

Figure 2.a. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

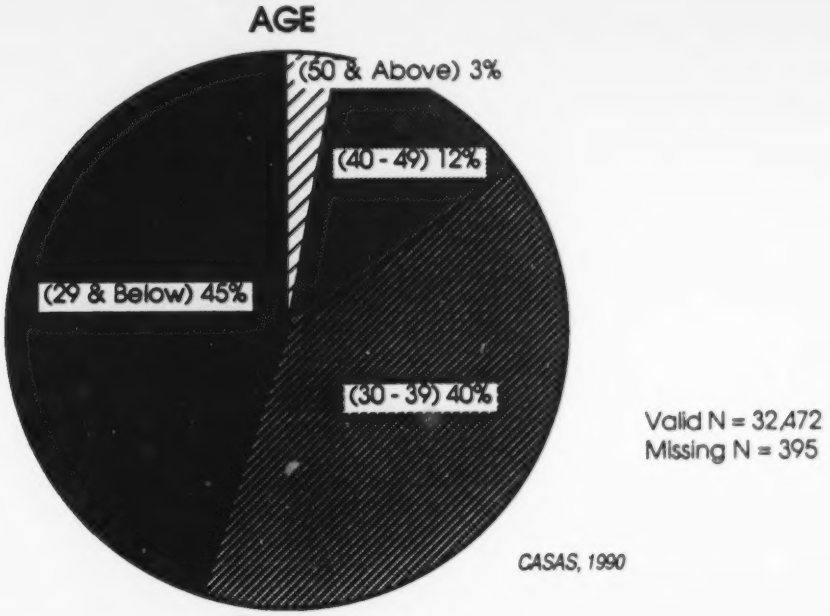


Figure 2.b. - San Diego County Population

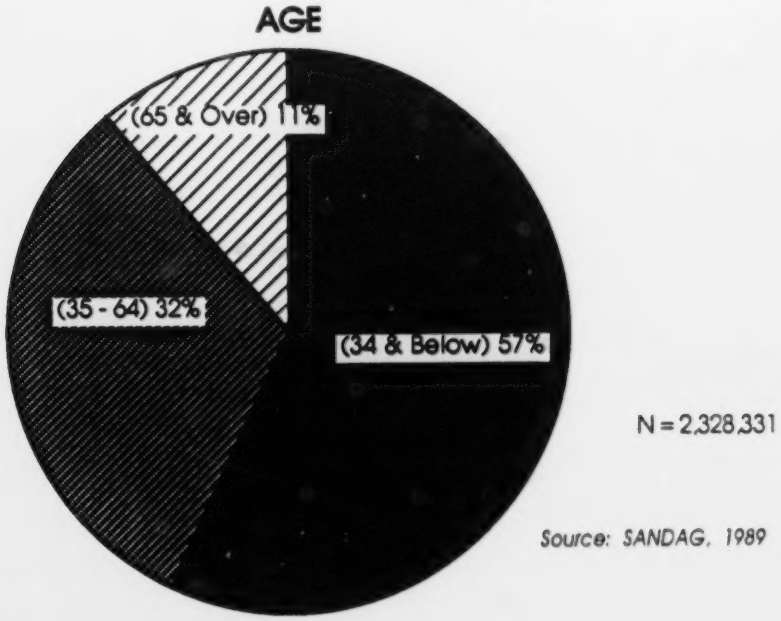


Figure 3.a. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

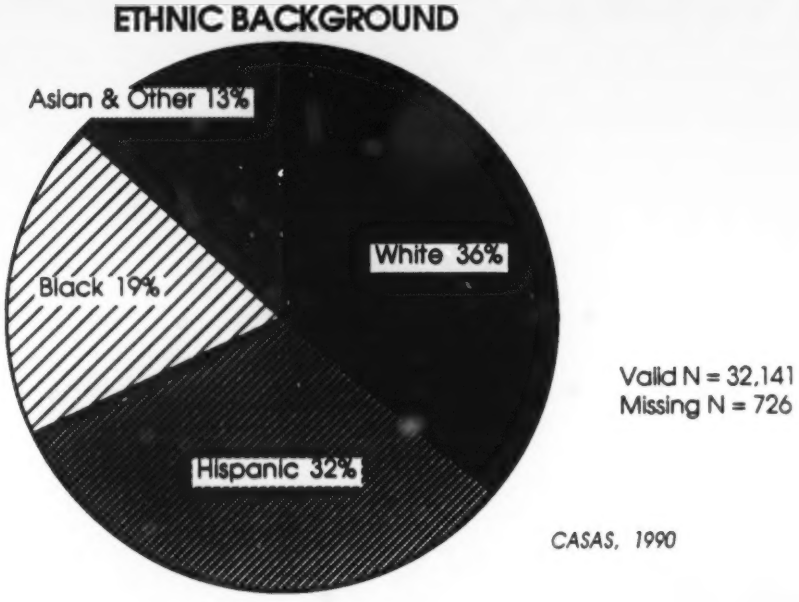


Figure 3.b. - San Diego County Population

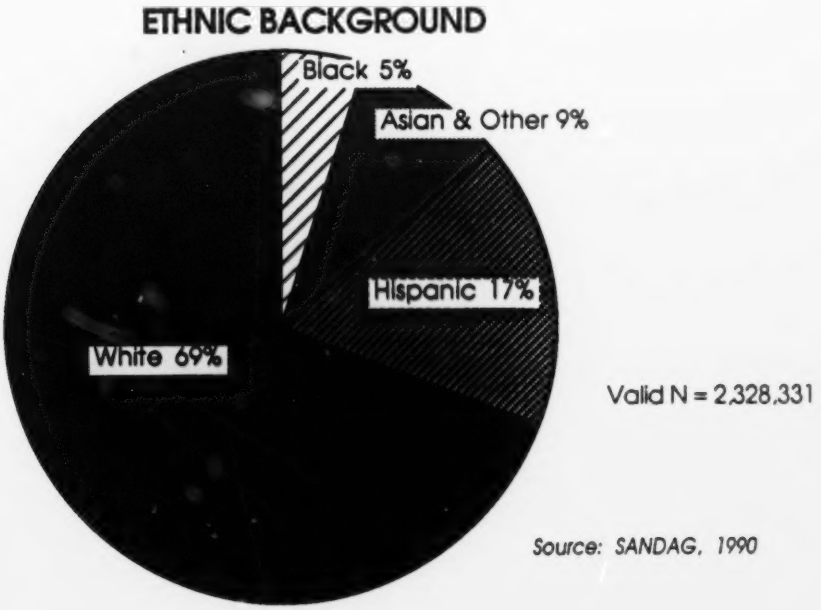


Figure 4.a. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

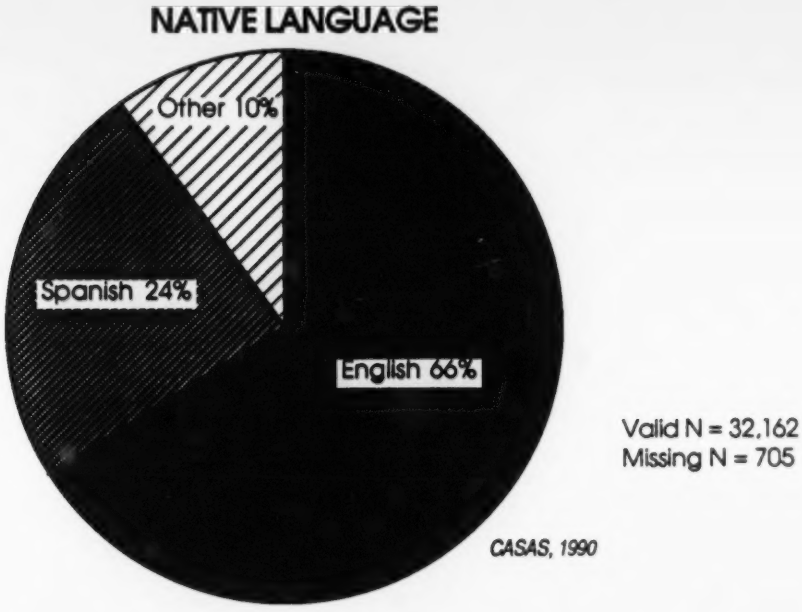
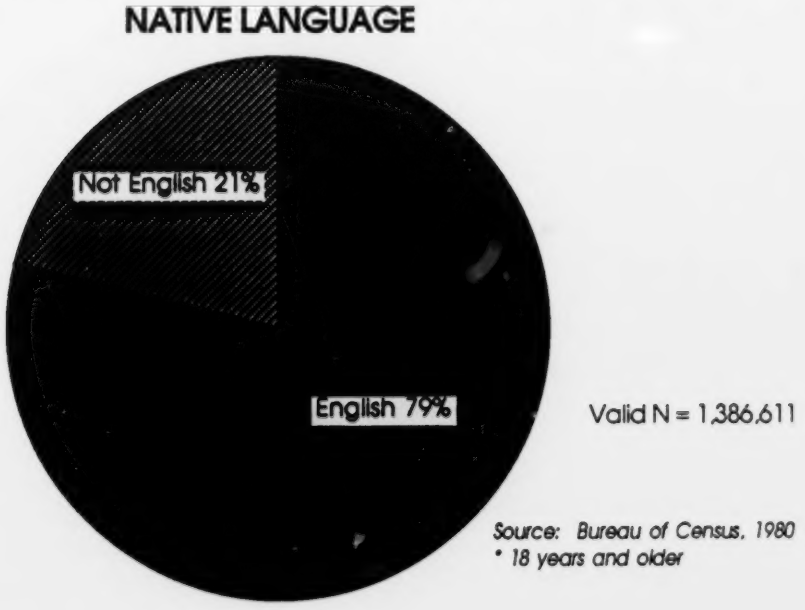


Figure 4.b. - San Diego Adult* Population



Years of Education Completed

A few similarities between the CASAS San Diego County database and the San Diego County population age 25 and older are identifiable upon review of Figures 5.a. and 5.b. The two groups are similar in the percent who completed only four or fewer years of school (4% and 3% respectively) and identical in the percentage (33%) of each group who completed 12 years of school. The two groups are in sharp contrast, however, in terms of completion of 13 or more years of school. Only 17 percent of the CASAS subsample completed 13 or more years of school compared to an estimated 45 percent of the larger San Diego County population. The San Diego County population and CASAS sample also differed in the remaining years of education completed categories. (See Figures 5.a. and 5.b.)

Once again, IRCA is not included in the data presentation because of its uniqueness in terms of the number of years of school completed by IRCA participants. Only six percent of the IRCA participants in this San Diego County sample completed 12 years of school and five percent completed 13 or more years. Twenty-one percent completed 9-11 years of school and 37 percent completed eight or fewer years of education. Nearly one-third (31%) of the IRCA participants completed four or fewer years of education.

Following Figures 5.a. and 5.b., the focus of this report turns to reading appraisal score performance. Reading appraisal data are aggregated in a variety of ways to facilitate both interpretation and application of this information to literacy program planning needs. Interpretation is also enhanced through referral to the scale score characteristics on pages 7 and 8 of this report.

Figure 5.a. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

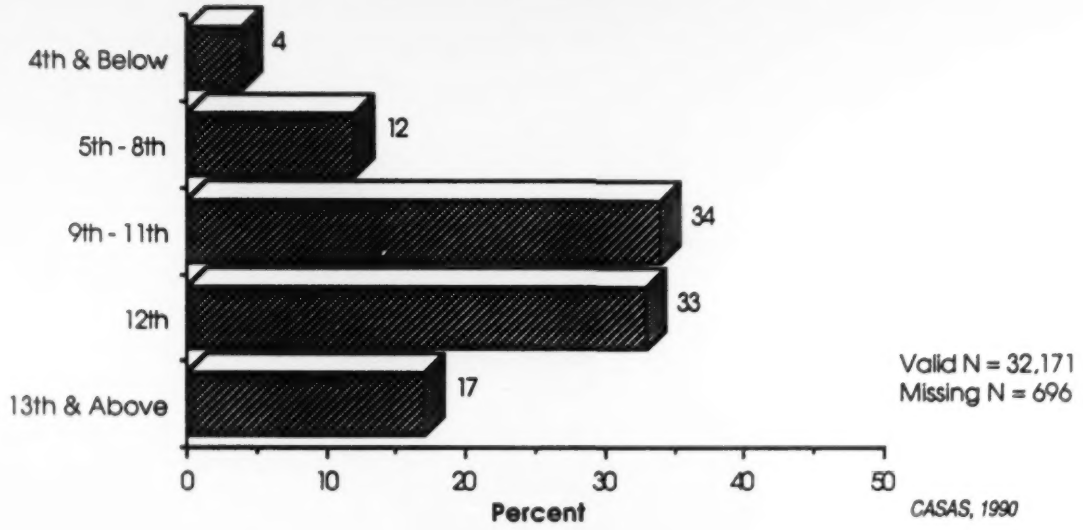
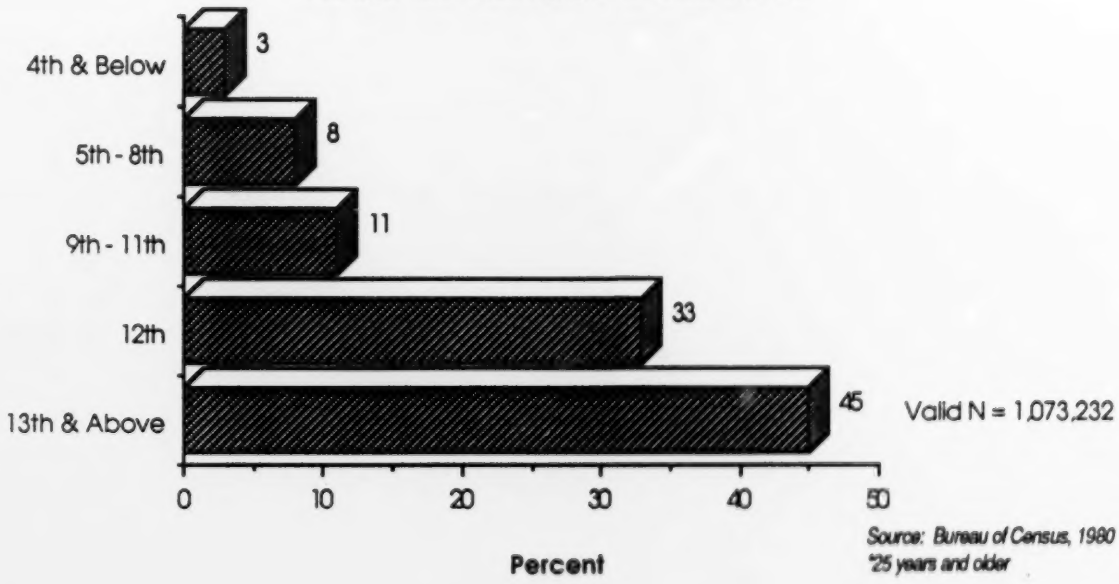


Figure 5.b. - San Diego County Adult* Population

YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED



San Diego County Reading Appraisal Scores

Assessment of basic reading, math and English language skills in a functional or "life-skills" context is an integral component of the CASAS system. This report is limited to basic reading comprehension skills assessment. Reading Appraisal score performance is available for 50,979 CASAS San Diego County participants in the six programs identified earlier. Reading test score performance is presented in Figures 6.a. through 9.b. The test score performance by IRCA participants in this San Diego County sample is presented in Figures 6.a., 7.a. and 8.a. but excluded from the remaining graphic presentations. A list of reading test score performance presentations is provided for easy reference.

6.a. San Diego County reading appraisal scores at four levels of performance. All six programs are included in the total sample percentages.

6.b. San Diego County reading appraisal scores at four levels of performance. IRCA is excluded from the total sample percentages.

7.a. The mean or average reading scores are presented for all six programs in this CASAS San Diego County database.

7.b. Mean reading scores are presented excluding IRCA from the mean or average score for the five program total.

8.a. The percentages of participants in the CASAS San Diego County database, including IRCA, scoring above and below a CASAS 215 scale score are presented.

8.b. The percentages of participants in the CASAS San Diego County database, including IRCA, scoring above and below a CASAS 225 scale score are presented.

9.a. Percentage of participants with CASAS Reading Appraisal scores above and below 215 excluding IRCA.

9.b. Percentage of participants with CASAS Reading Appraisal scores above and below 225 excluding IRCA.

Figure 6.a. - CASAS READING SCALE SCORES INCLUDING THE IRCA SAMPLE

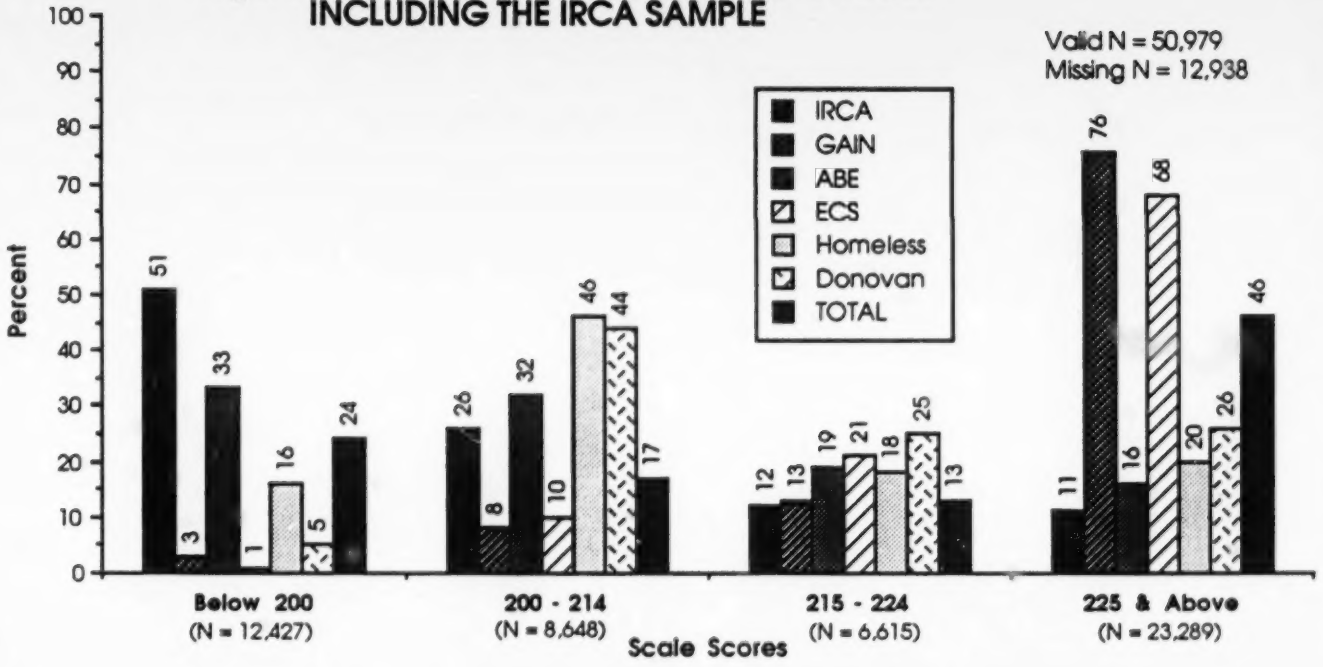


Figure 6.b. - CASAS READING SCALE SCORES EXCLUDING THE IRCA SAMPLE

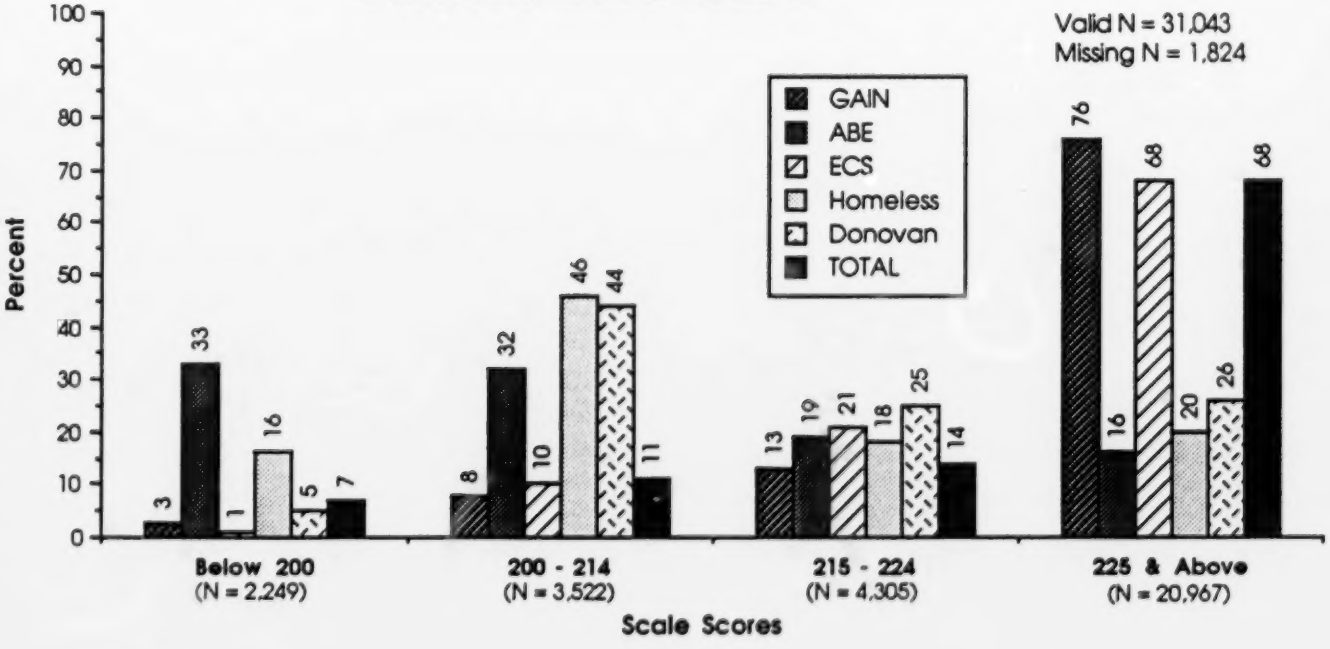


Figure 7.a. - CASAS READING MEAN SCALE SCORES INCLUDING THE IRCA SAMPLE

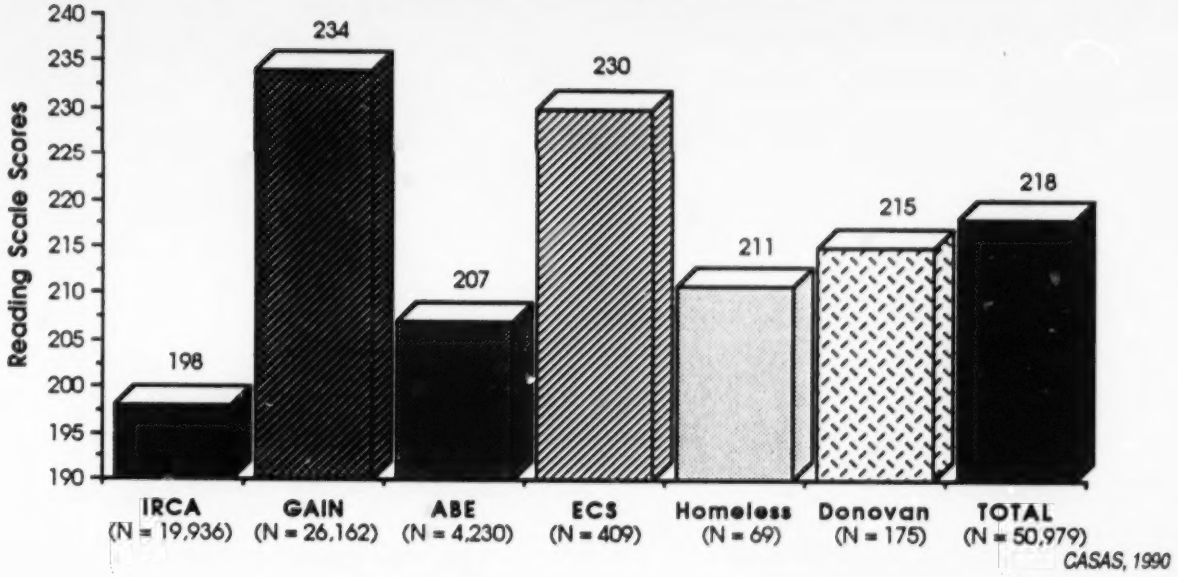


Figure 7.b. - CASAS READING SCALE SCORES EXCLUDING THE IRCA SAMPLE

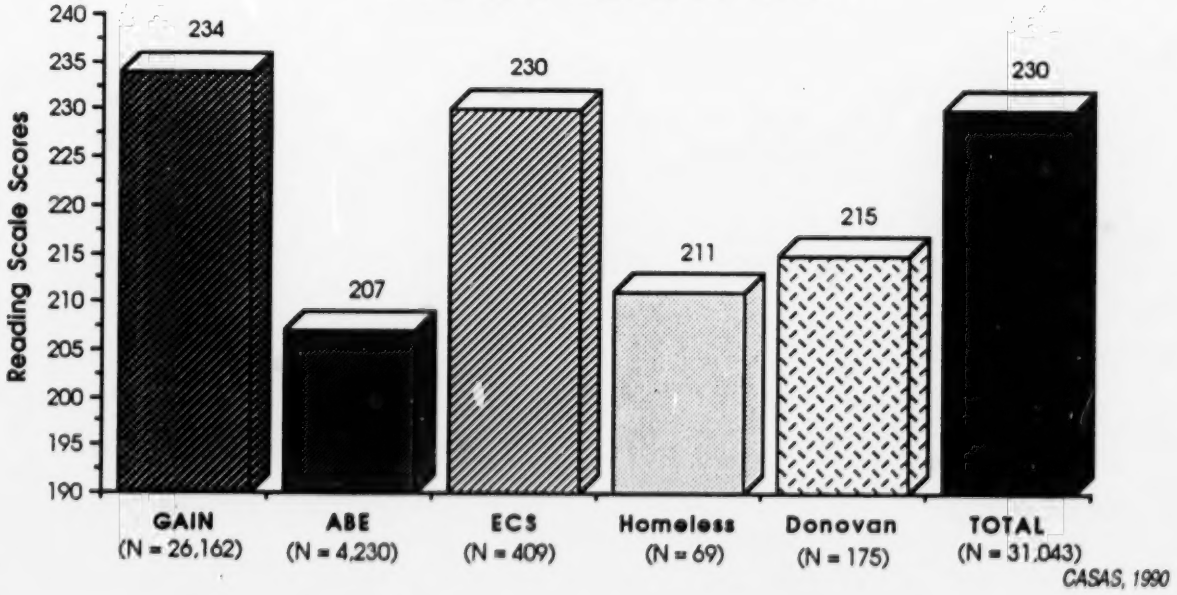


Figure 8.a. - CASAS READING SCALE SCORES BELOW/ABOVE 215

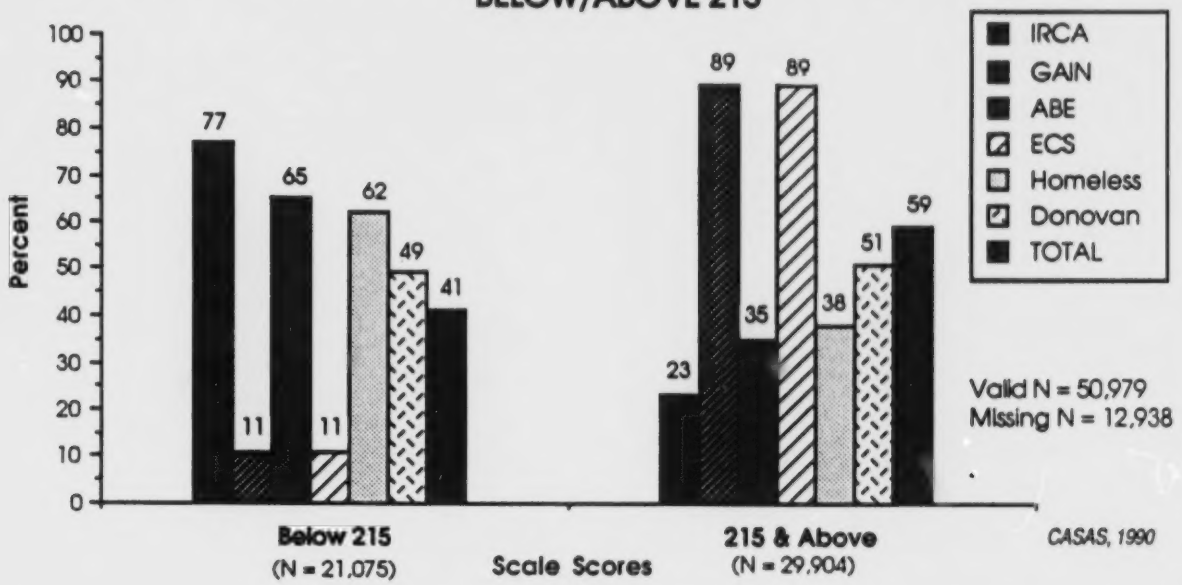


Figure 8.b. - CASAS READING SCALE SCORES BELOW/ABOVE 225

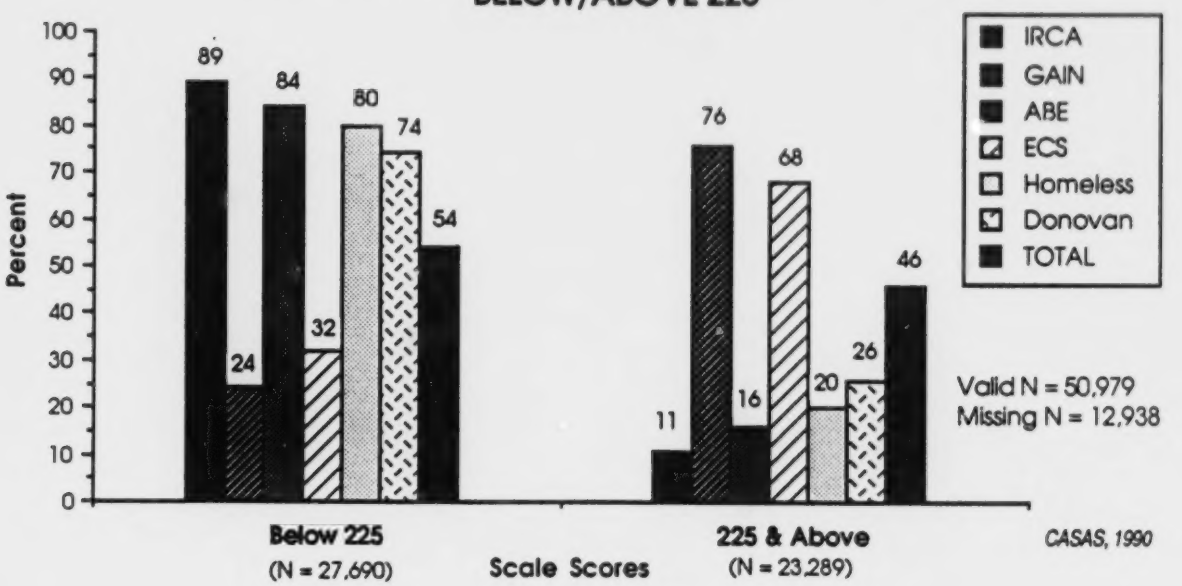
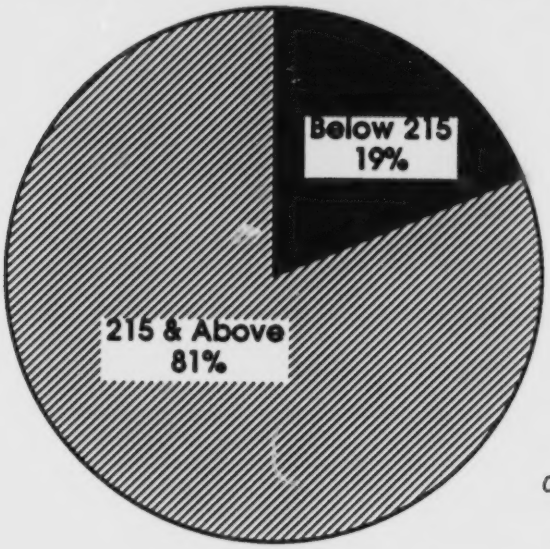


Figure 9.a. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

READING SCALE SCORES ABOVE/BELOW 215

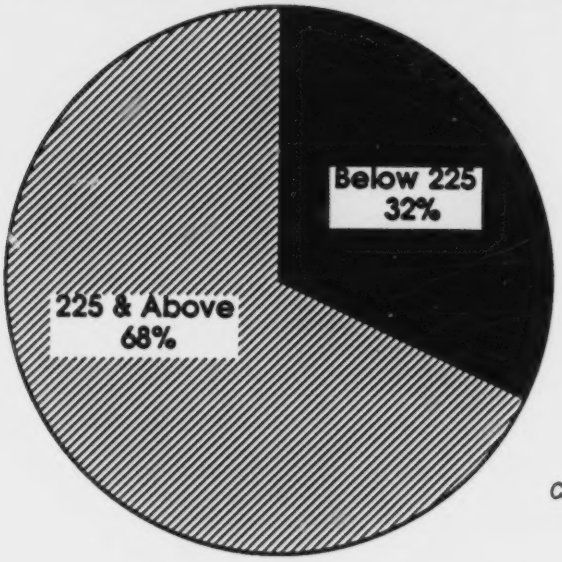


Valid N = 31,043
Missing N = 1,824

CASAS, 1990

Figure 9.b. - CASAS Five Program Subsample

READING SCALE SCORES ABOVE/BELOW 225



Valid N = 31,043
Missing N = 1,824

CASAS, 1990

Reading Appraisal Summary

San Diego County

CASAS Reading Appraisals measure specific competencies required for normal day-to-day functioning. For each of the six programs which comprise the CASAS San Diego County database, Figures 6.a. and 6.b. present the percentages of participants able to apply basic reading skills in a functional context. Only 46 percent of the participants overall scored at 225 or above, 13 percent scored between 215 and 224, 17 percent scored between 200 and 214 and 24 percent scored below 200. (See Figure 6.a.) The percentages excluding IRCA scoring at each of these four levels were 68, 14, 11 and 7 percent respectively. (See Figure 6.b.) In other words, 77 percent of the participants in the IRCA sample and 18 percent of the remaining population scored below 215 on the CASAS Reading Appraisal and therefore are not functioning at a basic literacy level. Participants scoring below a CASAS 215 are generally not able to function in jobs or job training that involves following oral and written instructions and diagrams. They have only limited ability to provide basic written information and satisfy basic survival needs or social demands.

While participants in the GAIN and ECS programs generally scored higher than the other program participants, it is important to note that nearly one-fourth (24%) of the GAIN participants and one-third (32%) of the ECS participants are functioning below a CASAS 225 indicating that they are functioning below a high school entry level in basic reading. This is also the case for 84 percent of the ABE participants in this CASAS San Diego County database.

The mean or average reading scores are presented in Figures 7.a. and 7.b. The overall mean reading score including IRCA participants was 218 compared to a mean reading score of 230 for the other programs combined (excluding IRCA). It is noteworthy that the modal score was lower than the mean for all programs except GAIN and ECS which means that the greatest frequency of participants in each of the other programs scored lower than the average score reported.

Figures 8.a. through 9.b. provide a solid basis for interpreting this data. Figures 8.a. and 8.b. provide percentages by each of the six programs allowing analysis based upon both the CASAS 215 minimal literacy benchmark and the CASAS 225 or above December 1989 California Education Summit Adult Literacy Focus Group's definition of literacy.

Forty-one percent of the study population including IRCA scored below 215 and 54 percent scored below a CASAS 225. The percentage of participants at the CASAS 225 and above level varied significantly by program. Only 24 percent of the GAIN population scored at this level compared to 89 percent of the IRCA participants. Excluding IRCA (see Figures 9.a. and 9.b.), 19 percent scored below the CASAS 215 minimal literacy benchmark and 32 percent scored below the CASAS 225 definition of literacy.

These preliminary findings are extremely valuable for gauging the breadth and depth of the illiteracy problem in San Diego County. As current county level demographic data become available, the CASAS sample can be weighted to approximate the larger San Diego County population, significantly increasing the accuracy of the estimated county literacy rate. CASAS Reading Appraisal scores are heretofore unavailable information providing valuable insight into the depth of the illiteracy problem for both the county population overall and for the various "at risk" subpopulations for whom data are available.

This information will enable greater efficiency in program planning with a potential for enhancing the success of literacy-related programs here in San Diego County. Congruent with the national literacy goal, every adult in San Diego County should possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This goal is critical by the year 2000 on a county level as well as on a national level in order that we remain competitive in the marketplace and allow San Diego County citizens to reach their maximum potential.

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